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COUNTRY Indochina

SUBJECT Vietnamese, Lao and Cambodian Troops under the French

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**SUPPLEMENT TO
REPORT NO.**

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1. There are at present about 50,000 Vietnamese, Laotian and Cambodian troops in Indochina under French control.
2. 20,000 troops are in Cochinchina, subdivided into the following groups:
 - (a) The Than Binh (12,000 of the total in Cochinchina). These troops were recruited from the Vietnamese population after the reconquest of the principal cities in Cochinchina by the French. These troops were trained and commanded by French and assimilated French cadres.* They are paid from funds of the French Union.
 - (b) The Cao-Dai, Hoa Hac, Binh Xuyen (6,000 of the total in Cochinchina). These troops revolted against the Viet Minh and joined the French. They are partly armed and paid by the French, but still retain their own cadres.
 - (c) The Catholic Army (2,000 of the total number in Cochinchina). This Army was created by the French in order to protect the Catholics from the oppression of the Viet Minh. The troops are armed by the French and supported by the Church. The cadres are French, naturalized French or Eurasians.
3. Annam or Central Vietnam (12,500 troops)
 - (a) Viet Binh Doan (60% of the number in Annam). This Army was called Ve quoc Doan in 1948. It was created by the French after the latter reconquered the important cities of Central Vietnam. Captain Nguyen Ngoc Le has been in command of the Army since 1948. This Army has just produced 500 non-coms and 60 second lieutenants. It is armed by the French and paid from funds of the French Union.
 - (b) Bao Ve Doan (20% of the number in Annam). This Army served under the French flags together with the Troupes coloniales. Cadres are French except for a few favored Vietnamese.
 - (c) The Mountaineers (20% of the number in Annam). These are recruited from among the minority groups in Annam. The cadres are French and native. They are entirely armed and paid by the French and are considered as the most loyal and efficient.

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Next Review Date: 2008

Approved For Release 2005/12/05 : CIA-RDP82-00457R003600500004-7

Document No.
No Change / In Class
☒ **Class** / **TS S G**
Auth: N. T. P.
Date: 2007
00457B003600500004

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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4. Tonkin or Northern Vietnam (10,000 troops).
 - (a) Nghia dung Doan (30% of the troops in Tonkin) These are recruited from among the population in French-held zones. They are armed by the French and supported by the population.
 - (b) The Viet Binh (60% of the number in Tonkin). These served in the French expeditionary forces. Officers are French.
 - (c) The Mountaineers (10% of the total troops in Tonkin) Recruited among the Tho Man, Mao and the population of the Highlands of Tonkin. Officers are French. They are armed and paid by the French.
5. Cambodia (15% of 50,000) This native Army is composed of former tirailleurs in the Cochinchina-Cambodia Division before the War. They are armed and paid by the French Union. Cadres are French and a few favored Cambodians.
6. Laos (10% of 50,000) The native army in Laos consists of former chasseurs in the Annam-Laos Brigade. They are armed by the French and paid by the French. Most of the officers are French and some are Cambodians who have been recruited and trained by the French.**
7. The Laotians are sent to fight the Viet Minh in Annam. The French used to tell them that if they did not fight, Laos would become a Vietnamese colony.
8. The Cambodians are used to fight the Viet Minh in Cochinchina. To persuade them to fight, the French say that the whole of Cochinchina was part of Cambodia and that good Cambodians must reconquer it.***
9. Bao Dai's troops fight the Viet Minh in some places. In Cochinchina, for instance, the Cao-Dai, Hoa Hao and Binh Xuyen create much more trouble for the Viet Minh than the French.
10. At present, the training of combatants and cadres in the Bao-Dai Army is as follows: 3 months for the privates, from 3 to 5 months for non-coms, and 6 to 8 months for officers. The latter are recruited from among those who have at least their diplomes d'etudes primaires superieures.***
11. According to reports from the French military authorities in Indochina to the French Cabinet, there are not enough arms and ammunition to supply the local troops in Indochina.
12. The Cao-Dai, Hoa Hao and Binh-Xuyen are more "bandits" than soldiers. They avail themselves of the troubled situations to plunder and rape the population. Their morale is very low, as even the French High Command in Indochina admit. Most fight to earn a living and some are ready to desert to the Viet Minh, once their families are safe from French reprisal.

* Comment. In the French Army the non-coms and the officers are called cadres.

** Comment. The French have picked these officers especially for their brutality.

*** Comment. Even the pro-French and the Bao-Dai do not like the idea of having the "stupid" Laotians and Cambodians come and pillage in Vietnam. Most people think the French will have to change these tactics of using Cambodians to fight Vietnamese and vice versa .

**** Comment: Before the war a Vietnamese who wanted to become an officer in the French Army must have had the baccalaureat metropolitain and receive at least one year training.

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